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ABSTRACT

Introductory paragraphs review studies by Holland, Thompson and George on the role of external factors in college choice. Particularly, the findings of George suggest that the affective aspects of college choice need to be dealt with. As a result, this study undertook to determine the differences in personality structure between commuter and resident students. A sample of 418 graduates of St. Louis area high schools were administered the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. Factors involved included its 15 scales, as well as sex and socioeconomic status of the family. The hypothesis examined stated that no differences existed between commuter and resident students with respect to the 17 variables. The procedures of data collection and analysis were discussed, as well as the results. The study concluded that: (1) the socioeconomic status of the family is significantly related to the choice of being a commuter or resident student; (2) commuter and resident students do seem to have different manifest personality needs; and (3) socioeconomic status, autonomy, dominance, change and aggression are the variables most helpful in predicting whether a student will become a resident or a commuter. (TL)

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RESIDENT OR COMMUTER:

A STUDY OF PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

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RESIDENT OR COMMUTER: A STUDY OF PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES[1]

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Colleges and universities throughout the United States are currently experiencing the problems resulting from an unprecedented increase in enrollments. Massive building programs are now being implemented, and more buildings are being planned in an attempt to provide for the increasing enrollments.

One result of the rapid increase in the number of college students has been the establishment of state university campuses, as well as the creation of junior colleges, in the urban centers of the country. This trend serves two functions: (1) it takes education facilities to the areas where most people live and (2) it makes a college education possible at a cost of only a fraction of that required by private institutions.

In establishing such campuses, however, administrators have been seeking to learn the patterns by which prospective college freshmen decide whether to become resident students or commuting students.

Most research to date has emphasized the role of external factors in college choice. Such factors as socio-economic status of the family, father's occupation, place of residence, family income, and social class have all been related to the choice of a college.

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Holland's (1958) study of National Merit Scholarship finalists related student choice of a college to a number of personal and cultural forces which preliminary studies by the author had suggested were meaningful correlates of college choice. Using four institutional classifications, students' choice of college was correlated with questionnaire responses and inventory scale scores. Holland concluded that the selection of an undergraduate institution was probably the outcome of a complex set of forces including student goals, abilities, and personality, which interact with parental values, education, socio-economic status, and parental image of the "best" and ideal college.

In this study of the factors that influence college choice among 754 high school seniors, Thompson (1966) found that the most important factors were the quality of the institution and the appropriateness of its curriculum for the individual. The influence of parents, friends, and relatives was very small. In addition, he found that commuters appeared to desire continued dependence on home and family, while resident students stressed the importance of independence.

George (1970) studied various factors to determine their relative importance in influencing students in their decision to attend a nearby campus of a state university or to attend the same university at a nearby campus where commuting to and from school is possible. Using the three major variables of socio-economic status, academic aptitude, and geographic proximity to the nearby campus, he concluded that both socio-economic status and geographic proximity were of major importance. He suggested, however, that further research was needed to deal with the affective aspects of college choice which might help explain the number of exceptions.

Procedure

The purpose of this study was to determine the differences in personality structure between students choosing to commute to a nearby college and students choosing to attend a college away from home. All of the subjects were 1969 graduates of St. Louis area high schools. The factors involved were the scores on the fifteen scales of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, as well as sex and socio-economic status of the family.

The following hypothesis, stated in null form, was examined in this study:

> There are no differences between students choosing to become resident students at colleges away from home and students choosing to commute to a nearby college while living at home with respect to:
>
> (a) achievement
> (b) deference
> (c) order
> (d) exhibition
> (e) autonomy
> (f) affiliation
> (g) intraception
> (h) succorance
> (i) dominance
> (j) abasement
> (k) nurturance
> (l) change
> (m) endurance
> (n) heterosexuality
> (o) aggression
> (p) sex
> (q) socio-economic status

The following terms are unique to this study and require operational definition: socio-economic status: the occupation of the head of household; using only two classes, professional-managerial and other than professional-managerial; commuter: any student choosing to commute from his home to attend a nearby college or university; resident: any student choosing to live on the campus of a college or university away from home.

A stratified random sample of students was selected for this study on the following basis: (1) all schools involved in the study were located within eight miles of the St. Louis campus of the University of Missouri and (2) a proportionate number of students was selected from city schools, county schools, and parochial schools.

The instrument chosen to measure the personality factors, the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, is designed to provide quick and convenient measures of a number of relatively independent normal personality variables. The EPPS consists of 225 pairs of statements which purport to measure variables associated with Murray's list of manifest needs and provide measures of fifteen personality characteristics.

Questionnaires, in the form of postage-paid postal cards, were sent in the fall to 649 high school graduates who had taken the EPPS during the spring of their senior year in high school. This questionnaire was designed to gather necessary data concerning marital status and whether the student was attending college, whether the student was living at home, and whether he was employed. A total of 445, or 68.5 percent, was returned, with 418 (64.4 percent) being analyzed in the study. Respondents were placed in three categories: commuting student, resident student, and non-student. All of the data were then placed on an IBM card for computer analysis.

The Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to determine the relation of the major variables to each other. Then a multiple regression design was used, utilizing the step-up procedure, to determine if a combination of two or more of the variables would be predictive of student status. Finally, each of the personality variables was combined with socio-economic status to determine the effect of the possible interactions. Thus,

a series of two-factor analysis of variance designs were conducted, utilizing the "equal numbers within means" method of Snedecor and Cochran (1967) to adjust for the unequal cell frequencies.

Results

Of the nineteen values of p resulting from the Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation, only one was statistically significant--socio-economic status, significant at the .01 level of confidence. This indicates that students whose father's occupation could be classified as professional-managerial were more likely to attend a college away from home as a resident student, while children of fathers whose occupational classification was other than professional-managerial were more likely to attend a nearby college while living at home.

Table 1 shows the regression coefficients resulting from adding a new variable to increase the level of correlation. Although the addition of other variables increase the R index, this increase probably does not account for any additional value. Therefore, when the increase in R became less than .01, no additional variables were added.

Table 2 presents the results of an analysis of variance designed to indicate the significance from 0 of the multiple R in Table 1. While a highly significent relationship is indicated, the absolute magnitude of the relationship is relatively low, providing little predictive power. In order to evaluate the combined effect of socio-economic status and each of the personality scales, a factorial analysis of variance design was used. Table 3 shows those combinations which were statistically significant.

Table 4 shows the direction of the significant differences indicated in Table 3. Students whose father's occupation is classified as professional-

managerial had a higher score in "Deference" than did those students whose father's occupation classification is other than professional-managerial. On the other hand, lower socio-economic level students had significantly higher scores in "Autonomy," "Aggression," and "Consistency" than did upper socio-economic level students. Commuting students had a higher score in consistency.

TABLE 1

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR STUDENT STATUS

Variable	B - Coefficient	Standard Error of B
Socio-Economic Status	-0.2366	0.0597
Autonomy	0.0104	0.0066
Dominance	0.0147	0.0064
Change	-0.0089	0.0060
Aggression	-0.0166	0.0065
Constant	1.8865	
R	0.3194	

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE INDICATING SIGNIFICANCE OF MULTIPLE R

Source of Variance	df	SS	MS	F
Regression	5	7.0420	1.4084	6.1613*
Error	271	61.9470	0.2286	

*Significant at the .01 level

TABLE 3

FACTORIAL ANALYSES OF VARIANCE BETWEEN STUDENT STATUS AND PERSONALITY SCALES

Scale	Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F
Deference	SES	53.828	1	53.828	5.21996*
	Stu Status	3.887	1	3.887	0.37691
	Interaction	6.723	1	6.723	0.65192
	Within	2804.858	272	10.312	
Autonomy	SES	122.359	1	122.359	6.21849*
	Stu Status	8.078	1	8.078	0.41454
	Interaction	13.688	1	13.688	0.41054
	Within	5352.058	272	19.677	
Aggression	SES	85.766	1	85.766	3.96750*
	Stu Status	78.703	1	78.703	3.64079
	Interaction	4.883	1	4.883	0.22587
	Within	5879.837	272	21.617	
Consistency	SES	12.266	1	12.266	6.87531**
	Stu Status	11.438	1	11.438	6.41111*
	Interaction	1.273	1	1.273	0.71380
	Within	485.251	272	1.784	

*Significant at the .05 level
**Significant at the .01 level

Conclusions

First, the data agree with a previous study that indicated that the socio-economic status of the family is significantly related to the choice of being a resident student or a commuting student. Students whose fathers were engaged in a professional-managerial occupation were more likely to attend school away from home.

TABLE 4

OVERALL AND CELL MEANS OF SCORES ON PERSONALITY SCALES
FOR RESIDENTS AND COMMUTERS

Scale	SES	Commuter			Commuter			Adj. Level Mean
		Mean	No	Adj No	Mean	No	Adj No	
Deference	Upper	9.24	41	54.5	9.87	68	54.5	9.5557
	Lower	10.47	105	83.5	10.45	62	83.5	10.4591
	Category	9.98	146	138.0	10.22	130	138.0	10.1023
Autonomy	Upper	15.34	41	54.5	15.13	68	54.5	15.2368
	Lower	13.52	105	83.5	14.23	62	83.5	13.8748
	Category	14.24	146	138.0	14.58	130	138.0	14.4127
Aggression	Upper	14.93	41	54.5	13.53	68	54.5	14.2281
	Lower	13.51	105	83.5	12.66	62	83.5	13.0877
	Category	14.07	146	138.0	13.00	130	138.0	13.5381
Consistency	Upper	12.56	41	54.5	11.99	68	54.5	12.2731
	Lower	11.99	105	83.5	11.69	62	83.5	11.8420
	Category	12.22	146	138.0	11.81	130	138.0	12.0122

Second, commuting students and resident students do seem to have different manifest personality needs, especially when socio-economic factors are taken into consideration. Commuting students seem to have a greater need for autonomy and dominance than do resident students, while resident students have a greater need for change and aggression than do commuting students.

Third, the strongest contribution of variables in attempting to predict whether a student will become a resident or a commuter consists of socio-economic status, autonomy, dominance, change, and aggression. However, the predictive power resulting from this combination is relatively low.

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